

# **Summary Notes, CRSP Portfolio Review, Public Comment Meeting**

***Friday, December 16, 2005***

***Venue-NASULGC (National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges)***

Background:

This meeting is a continuation of the discussion and feedback process that USAID has been facilitating in order to achieve an updated CRSP framework and agenda, and which was initiated by BIFAD one year ago. Every effort has been made to be transparent and participatory. The last public presentation and formal discussion occurred at the BIFAD meeting in Des Moines in October. As a result of that meeting, significant changes were made to the CRSP agenda/portfolio framework. Today's meeting, convened by USAID, is meant to be a friendly, informal discussion of the current CRSP portfolio proposal which is posted on the Agency's website. To make sure your comments are fully and fairly understood, extensive comments should be placed directly on the website at [www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/agriculture/crsp/index.html](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/agriculture/crsp/index.html).

It was noted that BIFAD has been working to have the Agency create a position and bring on board a Senior Agricultural and Natural Resources Science Advisor. The Senior Agricultural and Natural Resources Management Science Advisor will have a crucial role insuring that scientific rigor informs the science-led development activities of the Agency and that liaison with the U.S. university community is strengthened to better engage and connect the academic community with the Agency. As it stands, the decision to fill this role has become a personnel allocation and budget issue that BIFAD is working on.

Power Point presentation - "CRSP Portfolio Review within the Offices of Agriculture and Natural Resources Management"

The review started two years ago beginning with the Strategic Partnership for Agriculture Research and Education's (SPARE) subsector reviews in sustainable agriculture, integrated pest management, and fisheries/aquaculture. At the time, we determined that there should be a full agricultural research sector review because we needed to rationalize our investments and better align agriculture and natural resources management science with Agency priorities. Although assessments of individual CRSPs had been conducted, there have been no recent assessments of the CRSP Portfolio as a whole and its relevance to current researchable agriculture development constraints.

The Objectives of the Review

- Identify a coherent vision and set of research priorities consistent with the new Agriculture Strategy and Agency priorities (White Paper, Fragile States Strategy,

Millennium Development Goals, Regional Bureau Strategic Frameworks, the Presidential Initiative to End Hunger in Africa, etc.).

- Identify the most critical research issues with potential for development impact. These are issues that can have an impact on reducing poverty and increasing incomes and employment in developing countries. This is a goal we share with the university community.
- Propose mechanisms for implementation of a new agriculture program, including a research portfolio that mobilizes the capacities of US universities to work in partnership with host governments, the private sector, international agricultural research centers, and other donors. Particularly in areas where US universities have a comparative advantage.
- Develop a portfolio of activities that are flexible and responsive to USAID Mission and Bureau needs and can respond to emerging trends and new opportunities.

The review process included (1) a desktop review and priority setting exercise to identify gaps, (2) a stakeholder consultation in DC on June 8, after the completion of the draft of the desktop review, where many comments were received, and (3) an Agency-wide meeting on July 11.

The desktop review and Agency-wide meeting resulted in the development of four Research Framework Themes, which were used to guide the design of the proposed portfolio. Framework Themes were prioritized based on their potential to improve food security, increase and diversify incomes, develop domestic and regional trade opportunities, and reduce the risk and vulnerability of impoverished people; while at the same time, protect the natural resource base.

These themes were discussed informally at the CRSP Council meeting in August 2005 in Portland, Oregon, and no objections were recorded:

1. Staple Food Systems for Increased Incomes-A systems approach to increase productivity, processing, and trade in domestic and regional markets to meet food needs and generate income for producers and processors.
2. Higher Value Produces for Diversified Incomes-A value chain approach to diversify production and increase returns to producers in domestic, regional and international markets.
3. Agriculture and Natural Assets for Maintenance and Regeneration of the Resource Base-This theme addresses natural resource management across multiple-use landscapes that allows for long-term health and productivity of the resource base.
4. Policy, Markets, Trade and Governance for Pro-poor Growth-A body of research on policy issues, market access and institutional innovations that make agricultural growth and natural resource management pro-poor.

On September 1, a Working Group within EGAT started meeting almost daily to develop a proposed CRSP research portfolio which was put on the web on September 21 for public comment. The proposed portfolio consisted of five CRSPs that focused on important agricultural food systems (*first two themes of the Research Framework*):

1. Grains, Roots and Tubers
2. Legumes
3. Aquaculture and Fisheries
4. Horticulture and Specialty Crops
5. Animal-based Food Systems

Plus, four cross-cutting research and capacity building CRSPs (*responding to the remaining two Research Framework Themes*):

6. Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Services
7. Assets and Market Access
8. Innovations for Fragile and Marginal Areas
9. Promotion, Integration, and Response- A key aspect is that strong inter-CRSP collaboration would be promoted.

#### BIFAD Comments on the Original Proposed Portfolio:

BIFAD heard comments and discussed the original portfolio proposal in Des Moines on October 12, in conjunction with the World Food Prize. Prior to the BIFAD meeting, there was a written public comment period – these written comments were presented to BIFAD and discussed as well. There was strong BIFAD support for – and encouragement to – continue the process of reviewing and setting CRSP priorities. A review process that was undertaken at BIFAD’s request. BIFAD’s comments included:

- Rather than provide a range of research areas within each proposed CRSP topic and request the universities to justify where the focus should be, BIFAD requested that USAID identify priority research areas within the proposed CRSP topics prior to the RFA (request for assistance) process. USAID should not push research priority decisions to the bid process which will result in a short-term view of research.
- BIFAD recommended that USAID retain the current base, including commodity and animal programs, as well efforts to protect and sustain the natural resources base and not expand the program beyond nine to avoid the dilution of resources to each CRSP.
- Include a cluster of focus areas for development impact -- where one or more of the CRSPs would strive for impact, and their effectiveness would be measured by their outputs. BIFAD members have been urging for some time that each CRSP be required to achieve specific measurable outputs – the inclusion of Focus Areas helps implement this. We have included Focal Points in the revised proposed portfolio.
- Retain the original name---another name had been proposed to emphasize capacity building, but it was unwieldy, and we thought it important to retain the name of CRSP since it is easily recognized.

#### Additional Concerns over the Process:

- Use of mission versus core funding-it has never been an expectation to shift funding to missions. The Agency wanted to provide an opportunity for missions to buy in and to encourage such participation in the CRSPs. There will always be

core funding provided from Washington. We had deliberately framed the CRSPs broadly to provide missions and bureaus access to U.S. university expertise across a broader range of issues via associate awards. Core funding for individual CRSPs will target more focused research.

- The appropriate breadth of core research for certain CRSPs, e.g. Grains, Roots, and Tubers, which has since been changed to Sorghum, Millet and Other Grains. This discussion was particularly directed at the most appropriate breadth/grouping of the proposed: Grains, Roots & Tubers; and Legumes CRSPs. There were alternative views regarding the breadth of several CRSPs.
- How to consolidate knowledge across the CRSP portfolio-everyone agreed that we need to maximize collaboration. We propose to handle this through a set of Common Core Components, along with the idea of intellectual leadership assigned to individual CRSPs.
- Too little time for public comment on earlier drafts. The current public comment period is a full month.
- Solution to problem of not being able to make comments available for public view due to constraints of the USG Privacy Act – contributors told ahead of time that their comments will be made public. Comments are posted without attribution.

Current Proposed Revised CRSP Portfolio—will be phased in over four years:

- Sorghum, Millet, and Other Grains- sorghum/millet for human consumption.
- Peanut- peanuts for human consumption along the full value chain w/ attention to nutrition and food safety.
- Aquaculture and Fisheries- sustainable aquaculture of freshwater, brackish and marine organisms.
- Assets and Market Access- rural and agricultural households' access to and use of finance, tenure, risk, labor, natural resources, and technology transfer.
- Dry Grain Pulses- beans and cowpeas for human consumption.
- Horticulture and Specialty Crops- production and trade of selected vegetables, fruits and specialty crops for increased nutrition and incomes. This is an outcome of the Global Horticulture Assessment.
- Animal Source Foods- production and sustainability of animal production and management systems.
- Soil, Water and Ecosystem Services- the maintenance or regeneration of the resource base in multi-use landscapes while increasing agriculture and natural resource based incomes.

USAID core funding will support the primary research (leader award) described for each proposed CRSP. We also propose that each CRSP Management Entity demonstrate the capacity to address a broader range of research and capacity development needs in secondary research areas, if and when additional resources become available.

What's Different:

- Broadening Access and Strengthening Input Systems (BASIS) CRSP- BASIS will be re-bid under a new name. It will continue its support for research on factor

markets, poverty, and assets, but with a revised framework that also looks at access to output markets, globalization issues and other trends.

- Soils CRSP-phased out in 2007, soil management issues will be addressed in other CRSPs - several steps will be taken to ensure that key soil management issues are addressed in future CRSPs, e.g., soil conservation and productivity will be incorporated into all commodity CRSPs as they are re-competed. In addition, a major soils component will be integrated into the new Soil, Water & Ecosystems Services CRSP to be competed in 2009.
- IPM CRSP—IPM will continue to be supported, as awarded, through September 30, 2009. As new commodity CRSPs are re-competed in 2006 and 2007, IPM approaches to pest management will be integrated in their proposals.
- SANREM- will continue to be supported, as awarded, through September 30, 2009. Key elements of this research will be incorporated into a more focused Soil, Water & Ecosystem Services CRSP that will be competed in 2009. In addition, components for maintenance and regeneration of the resource base will be incorporated into relevant production CRSPs as they are re-competed.
- Water management issues—Several steps are envisioned to ensure that key water issues are addressed in future CRSPs. First, a water quality and productivity focus point will be incorporated into all production CRSPs as they are re-competed. In addition, a major water component will be integrated into the Soil, Water & Ecosystem Services CRSP.
- Core program components – Five core program components will provide a coherent approach across the portfolio. Each CRSP, as appropriate, will be required to incorporate core program components into their overall approach.
  1. Systems approach - to ensure that research does not occur in isolation from the social, political, market and environmental influences that ultimately affect the adoption and use of technologies. The systems approach looks at: livelihoods (*incomes employment, gender, health, governance, etc.*), production landscapes (*multiple land uses – other crops grown in combination with the CRSP commodity, livestock, forestry, etc.*), and markets.
  2. Ecosystem health - to protect and sustain the natural resources base.
  3. Capacity building and institutional strengthening - to enhance the skills and expertise among host-country scientists, universities, research institutions, governments and NGOs.
  4. Outreach, dissemination, and adoption - to make research results available to large numbers of farmers, communities, and development practitioners through PVOs, NGOs, government extension services, and private sector partners
  5. Intellectual leadership - to consolidate and describe state-of-the-art research in areas with impact on U.S. and developing country agriculture.
- Focal Points for Development Impact - In an effort to align CRSP research with key development outcomes, and to respond to BIFAD's recommendation for a cluster of focus areas that help the CRSPs to achieve specific measurable outputs, we propose that each CRSP address up to four Focal Points for Development Impact.
  - Improving nutrition and health
  - Maximizing water, soil quality, and productivity

- Broadening market access
- Mitigating post harvest constraints
- Enhancing productivity and livelihoods in marginal areas
- Advancing integrated pest management practices
- Increasing incomes
- Improving food quality, processing and food safety.

For example, CRSPs with the assigned task to consolidate and describe state-of-the-art research in areas of impact on U.S. and developing country agriculture related to one of the Focal Points will synthesize information and discuss findings as an Intellectual Leader as described above. BIFAD meetings or other arranged public seminars would be used to highlight the work of CRSPs.

Current Status-these are proposed drafts and USAID is looking for additional comments and it is expected that further changes will be made. Also, the Agency will be reviewing feedback as it comes in on website.

Next steps

- Review of public feedback and develop final draft CRSP Portfolio
- Consult with BIFAD on final product
- Release final CRSP Portfolio and Research Framework to public (in January, and after that, four CRSP RFAs will be prepared)

Comments following presentation:

BIFAD has asked for a handful of fairly defined objectives every five years. To ask for 5 measurable outcomes and four focal areas is too high of an expectation with regards to capacity.

Focal points provide a roadmap. They do not necessarily define the research agenda. The focal points and focus of research is not the same thing.

It is important to have measurable outcomes...they can't be process issues. This is important for accountability and reporting. It makes me nervous to have people working on focal areas without having measurable outcomes, and to have CRSPs trying to work on too many things. We need to be able to say in five years that we got the job done.

The focal areas go beyond whatever measurable indicator/research focus area a CRSP has. Rather, they go to the development impact, and are bigger than what an individual CRSP may do. They are not process oriented. A CRSP might take the lead on one of the focal points, and the work that they do should contribute to that. At some point, a CRSP might convene the other CRSPs and talk about how they contribute to that theme by presenting work and impacts. These focal points don't necessarily have to be the final focal points.

The process of determining the research needs and agendas of CRSPs was initially scientifically based and well-analyzed. In the process of creating CRSPs, Congress asked

AID to get more involved in two things: sustainable agriculture resources and natural and IPM that was viewed as necessary. I wonder what has changed that these are no longer critical research areas.

The research areas under IPM will continue in the commodity CRSPs.

We must do research and investment that will lead to economic development. We must define results and how to get an impact from the CRSPs based on the funds invested in them.

We understood that BIFAD and SPARE recommended that they continue (IPM and SANREM). What has changed, and why did USAID decide otherwise? Also, you don't need to restructure to get more impact. If we're looking for impact, must this in the RFP.

We needed to make some hard decisions and decide how to maximize results with limited resources. We had to consolidate. IPM will still be addressed, but within the context of other CRSPs. As it applies to SANREM, we need more of a focus on soils, water, and ecosystem services.

Much of what is in the new proposal for Soils, Water, and Ecosystem Services seems to have been directly taken from our SANREM proposal. For example, the need to address livelihoods, the need for small-scale activities, the need for links at the ecosystem level, the requirement for soil conservation, capacity building with reforestation. We are doing exactly what you are saying the new CRSP will have to do. So, rather than get a new CRSP, I propose that you change the name of what is now the SANREM CRSP to Soils, Water and Ecosystem Services....we are already doing the work.

The idea was to phase out the soils CRSP. There are nuances with the new proposal. The difference is more emphasis on soil and water.

A lot of the work that the new agenda and framework is talking about has already been done. All the focal points that are proposed, for example, are already being addressed, and I urge that no new CRSPs be proposed. There was a strong feeling among the members (BIFAD) that n new CRSP be proposed. (There is a strong disconnect between what BIFAD has recommended and what USAID is doing.)

It is fair to say that BIFAD pushed AID a few years ago to review the portfolio.

In SANREM, there has been a deliberate effort to integrate the research, and to do the cross-cutting research. But resources are dwindling, and I question the capacity to do more of the cross-cutting research...because while it is elegant, it requires additional resources to address the complexity. How is a topic different from a focal point? How thin do you want to spread the resources?

The focal points are rather like a list of considerations rather than things you need to get done. You need to have down what you are going to produce.

IPM is by its nature systems level work. If you move it into the commodity CRSPs, you will not get the systems level work.

Much of the fear that is coming out here is a result of the RFA process, it caused distress. In the current system, there is a tremendous amount of flexibility in that research agendas are defined by stakeholders outside of USAID, which allows us to respond to changing circumstances. We are fearful that this will disappear as the research agendas will be defined by USAID, and will not reflect scientific objectivity. I don't look to USAID for technical direction...I look to scientists and stakeholders. That we would have to have this technical direction defined by USAID is inconsistent with the spirit of Title XII legislation which calls for partnership.

We need to align research priorities with USAID priorities. For example, how to achieve and diversify incomes...what are the key research areas to achieve these results of creating new jobs....and then put out the RFA and let the universities tell us.

But this is not a process of engagement between universities. This is not encouraging scientific exchange between universities. There are broad communities of agricultural researchers internationally and nationally, and there must be consultation among them on exact issues of importance in a research-for-development impact activity such as a CRSP. For example, the subsectors review...that was a process that solicited external input.

It's a good idea to bid out the CRSP. AID made an important shift; we are going to establish priorities then let the RFA process define the CRSP. Now when we bid out the ME will AID say what peanuts will do or will the proposer? How do you set forth an RFA that will give some real flexibility to gain input from a broad community?

The Horticulture assessment was the model. It took one year and cost \$500,000. It defined the horticulture issues and now we have a defined agenda. We would want input from the university community on how to put out the RFAs.

However, there needs to be a distinction made between an assessment that needs to be done to issue an RFA, and one that needs to be done to create or eliminate a CRSP. The rigorous process that goes into creating a CRSP is not done for eliminating a CRSP. It is disturbing how the CRSPs are being dropped, particularly the IPM and SANREM CRSPs. IPM cannot be sufficiently and systemically addressed as a conceptual approach to crop protection if it is assigned to the individual commodity CRSPs....and we are not saying that they should not do IPM...we are saying they can't address it sufficiently as a conceptual approach to crop protection, which is the task of the current IPM CRSP.

You have to put in the RFA how the program will have benefits in both the US and internationally. This is a unique feature of the CRSP concept. This cannot be neglected.

What we see in USAID is that there is no long term thinking that parallels the research agenda. What are we going to be measured on? If there is a 5-year timeframe, by the time you lay the foundation, etc, you are down to 3.5 years to make something happen. In terms of capacity building, 5 years is also not enough.



This process of creating the new CRSP framework has been flawed from the start because rather than creating the new agenda through an intentional iterative and collaborative process, it has been more like a ping-pong process (USAID puts out a proposed portfolio, the universities/public respond, a new proposal is put out by the Agency, the universities/public are again invited to comment...). It has moved away from the original intent of Title XII legislation for fuller engagement and mutuality of goal setting using a consultative process. Each side defines partnership differently, and the process isn't working..

Spent 20 years in research. (Noted that the audience today is heavily invested in the CRSPs -- almost all present are either CRSP institutions or USAID representatives; only a handful are interested "outsiders.") Change is occurring because we have been forced to take a step back and look at the competition, and to recognize that we are under certain new restraints in our development activities relative to agriculture and natural resources management. Globalization has demanded this change. We need to redefine what USAID has done, and what the Agency can do to promote agriculture and natural resources management as key components of our development efforts. I hear the concerns today, but it is necessary for all of us to take a step back and take a broad view.

Because of the politics, AID has been pressured to become more short term focused, and it has less and less resources to spend on thinking and to look deeply at issues. The university has less of a role today. We are the intellectual components of the project. BIFAD is one of the few statutory structures that says it has to be long term...and the university is saying that this is statutory, that it is fair to take a long term look.

It took real nerve for the AID folks to do this work, and BIFAD pushed them to do it. We have to give them credit, and take note that they clearly listened.

- The focal point list is almost like a checklist, and it does not replace the 5 key issues that need to be addressed in each CRSP. It is important that the CRSPs have a few key points that they can articulate and deliver on. Competition is good for us, but we need to think about how to minimize disruptions in ongoing research activities under existing CRSPs.
- The IPM question is there...can IPM be sufficiently addressed in the commodity CRSPs?
- The RFA question...we have to be careful not to too constrictively define it, which would have the effect of precluding consultation among universities. The ME has to have flexibility.

We have to make contributions to the Agency that helps us make agriculture a priority again.

We have tried to make this process as participatory as possible. We have faced resource constraints, and have just faced a huge cutback in OE (Operations and Expenses). We urge you to maximize your relationships with your Congressional people so that they understand what your contributions are.

Main points of discussion:

- Research areas under IPM will continue in commodity CRSPs
- Commodity CRSPs will be unable to sufficiently address all the issues associated with IPM, because much of what IPM is and does is outside the realm of any individual CRSP (e.g. pesticide disposal, migratory pests). IPM must be addressed using a systems approach, taking into account many considerations that transcend any particular commodity.
- We must be able to better demonstrate the results for the investment. The revised CRSP portfolio is meant, in part, to better facilitate and demonstrate the impact of CRSPs on the major development issues that are important to the agency.
- There seems to be a disconnect between what BIFAD has recommended and what USAID is doing.
- Much of what is being proposed in the new framework is already being done by the existing CRSPs, including much of what the focal points suggest. The point was made that this argument suggests that maybe a “connect” has been made...the language and framework of the new agenda will better reflect what the CRSPs have already been doing.
- Research agendas should be set by scientists and stakeholders through a process of engagement and exchange, not by USAID or by one ME. Much care will need to be taken that the RFA process is not too prescriptive. Can refer to the Horticulture Assessment as a model.
- Concerns that the proposed framework is inconsistent with Title XII because it may not allow/encourage the full potential of input and direction from the scientific community.
- Concern that 5 year timeframe is too short for proper research agendas.